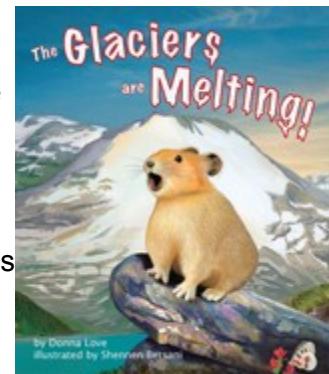


A Conversation with Donna Love, author of Henry the Impatient Heron

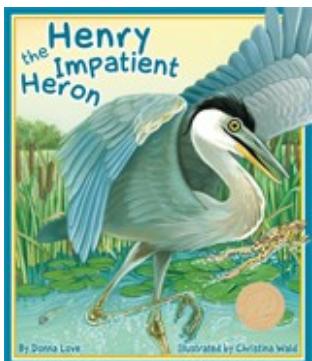


Where did you get the idea to write *The Glaciers are Melting!*?

I have another book out for children about Glacier National Park called, *The Totally Out There Guide To Glacier National Park* released in 2010. As I was working on that book in 2008 and 2009, I kept coming across the phrase, "The Glaciers Are Melting!", which reminded me of the Henny Penny story, "The Sky Is Falling." It just seemed to fit. So I played around with some animals that live high in the mountains and came up with a story about a few animals that live high on the mountain that are well adapted to a cold, snowy climate. I wondered what it would mean to them if the glaciers melt. Children hear things from our adult world and wonder about them – will it hurt them, will it be bad, will it be good. I thought this story would be a good way to introduce them to the concept of our melting glaciers (they really are melting). In addition, since Sylvan Dell Publishing provides more info on the subjects they publish in the back of all their books, I felt they were a good fit for *The Glaciers Are Melting!* A child can read the book and then learn more about the subject. Are the glaciers really melting? What will happen if all the glaciers melt? Can we or should we do anything about it? I like that approach. It's an approach that enlightens, not frightens.



What was your incentive to write *Henry, the Impatient Heron*?



My greatest incentive to writing *Henry the Impatient Heron* was a sixteen-nest heron rookery near our home. It was so much fun to watch the young herons growing up – from just small birds in the nests to tall gangly chicks flapping their wings and learning to fly. It was also great to see what dedicated parents great blue herons are. They were always coming and going from the nearby river to the nest and back again as they fed their chicks. (They eat the food first and then regurgitate into the chick's mouth!) Later I had the chance to watch a pair of fledged chicks learning to hunt. The silly antics of the young herons, both in the nest and the pair that had fledged, became the inspiration for *Henry*. The young herons hopped and flopped after food of all sorts, while the mother patiently fed nearby, keeping a watchful eye on her chicks. A great blue heron must stand still for long periods of time to catch its prey. I wondered what would happen if a young great blue heron couldn't stand still for very long.

What is the most frequently asked question you encounter as an author, and what is your answer?

My most frequently asked question is how do you come up with ideas? I'm tempted to answer that with the rhetorical question, "How many things are there in the world?" My real problem is I have too many ideas. I think that's because I stay busy watching and thinking. When walking, driving, traveling, anytime, I notice things and ask myself, "Why is that? or "Why does it do that?" Also, keep reading. Read, Read, Read, Read!



What is your favorite aspect of the writing process?

I love to learn – about any subject, so that's the first most satisfying aspect of writing. I read as much as I can about a subject until I can understand it, and then I try to explain that in a simple way that even I can understand. Next, I love wordsmithing, which is taking a thought and making it readable whether that's a chapter, paragraph or sentence. If it doesn't flow like someone would speak it, then it will be too hard to read.

When are you most creative? (Or what sparks your creativity?)

I'm most creative when I think about one person who I think would like to learn about a certain subject, and I write the book for that person. For instance, I thought my husband's mother and his sister, who love to watch herons, would like to learn about herons, so I wrote this book for them - like a letter. Then it's not hard. It's fun. And, it keeps me focused.

When did you become interested in writing?

I've always loved to write. I wrote my first book when I was in third grade. I loved horses and that first one was "Horses of the World," that I even illustrated. I still have that little book. Then I got busy with school and marriage and raising children. I channeled my creative writing into long, descriptive baby books about my children growing up. I didn't just record their age and weight; I wrote about their likes and dislikes, their birthdays, funny things they said, and where we went on vacations. I also wrote long letters home to Grandma telling her about their likes and dislikes, their birthdays, funny things they said, and where we went on vacation... well, you get the picture. Anyway, many years later, when we moved to Seeley Lake for my husband's work, I watched a pair of common loons nest and raise their chicks on the lake near our home. That resulted in my first published book in 2003.



What advice do you have for any children or young adults who are interested in writing?

Read, Read, Read, Read, Read. I don't have any formal training as an author, but I love to read and always have. Between the ages of 8 and 12 I read Black Beauty eight times. I believe reading puts the pattern for writing in someone's head. It sets the stage so to speak. Then write, write, write, write, write. I wrote my first book in third grade. It was called "Horses of the World." I drew a picture of a variety of horses, like a Shetland pony and a thoroughbred, and a draft horse, etc and wrote a paragraph about each horse, which looking back really should have been a huge hint that I should be a writer. Then in 7th and 8th grade I hand wrote (we didn't have computers back then) a 350 page book about a girl and horse (I was very horse crazy), as well as lots of other stories. This too helped me be a better writer. Then, don't worry if those stories don't get published. It is great practice for later.

What is most rewarding and/or challenging about writing children's books?

I read to my children almost every night. It was such a special time. The youngest was put to bed first, so I read to him and got him settled in. He liked funny, silly stories. Then I read to our middle child. One winter, she and I enjoyed the whole *Little House on the Prairie* series a few pages at a time. That is one of my most treasured memories with her. Then I'd settle my oldest child in. He liked sports stories and super hero books. Reading to the children meant turning off the TV and getting up and doing it (really hard to do after a long day at work), but it was worth the sacrifice. Now when I write, I like to imagine a young mother or father snuggled up next to their child holding one of my books in their hands, turning the pages, learning about a new subject, ooohing and awing over the pictures, and sending love to their child with every word read.



What would you write about and share with the world if you could write about anything, and no matter what, it would be published?

Grief. I know that sounds sad, but I would. I lost my father when I was seventeen, my mother recently when she was 73, and we lost a daughter when she was four to Hib before there was a vaccination for the illness. However, I would write about hope and courage and how to be kind to someone who has lost a loved one. And I would write about how it's OK to go on. Grief is a universal theme. Everyone faces it sometime in their lives, and it's one of the hardest things in life to face and is so little understood by everyone. There needs to be a really great book out there about grief.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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